National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

Health, "illth," and economic growth: Medicine, environment, and economics at the crossroads

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Abstract:

Economic growth has been the single biggest contributor to population health since the Industrial Revolution. The growth paradigm, by definition, is dynamic, implying similar diminishing returns on investment at both the macro- and the micro-economic levels. Changes in patterns of health in developing countries, from predominantly microbial-related infectious diseases to lifestyle-related chronic diseases (e.g., obesity, type 2 diabetes) beyond a point of economic growth described as the epidemiologic transition, suggest the start of certain declining benefits from further investment in the growth model. These changes are reflected in slowing improvements in some health indices (e.g., mortality, infant mortality) and deterioration in others (e.g., disability-associated life years, obesity, chronic diseases). Adverse environmental consequences, such as climate change from economic development, are also related to disease outcomes through the development of inflammatory processes due to an immune reaction to new environmental and lifestyle-related inducers. Both increases in chronic disease and climate change can be seen as growth problems with a similar economic cause and potential economic and public health-rather than personal health-solutions. Some common approaches for dealing with both are discussed, with a plea for greater involvement by health scientists in the economic and environmental debates in order to deal effectively with issues like obesity and chronic disease.

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Resource Description

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Unspecified Exposure

Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

Global or Unspecified

Health Co-Benefit/Co–Harm (Adaption/Mitigation):

specification of beneficial or harmful impacts to health resulting from efforts to reduce or cope with greenhouse gases

A focus of content

Health Impact:

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Cancer, Cardiovascular Effect, Diabetes/Obesity

Model/Methodology:

type of model used or methodology development is a focus of resource

Cost/Economic

Resource Type:

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Timescale:

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified